

We claim:

1. A method for providing a link in an electronic file being presented to a user, comprising:
  - defining a customized viewpoint for the user that includes a preference for the user, the preference for the user providing an association between a data pattern and a computer network resource;
  - generating a request for content;
  - in response to the request, receiving an electronic file;
  - evaluating the electronic file to recognize a match between at least one portion of the electronic file and the data pattern;
  - upon recognizing a match, modifying the electronic file to include a link to the computer network resource associated with the matching data pattern; and
  - presenting the modified electronic file to the user.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the defining step includes selecting the customized viewpoint from among a plurality of viewpoints.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon data that identifies the user.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon a characteristic of the user.
5. The method of claim 2, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon a selection by the user.
6. The method of claim 2, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon data obtained from a cookie file stored on a computer that is being operated by the user.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the user is a member of an organization, and the customized viewpoint is defined by the organization.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the user is a member of a category of users, and the viewpoint is customized for the category of users.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein the customized viewpoint is defined to include a second preference for the user providing an association between a second data pattern and a second computer network resource.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein the preference also provides an association between a second data pattern and the computer network resource.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein the data pattern includes a user-viewable data pattern.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein the user-viewable data pattern is selected from the group consisting of a text pattern and a graphic pattern.
13. The method of claim 1, wherein the data pattern includes a non-viewable data pattern.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein the non-viewable data pattern is selected from the group consisting of a metatag, a script and an applet.
15. The method of claim 1, wherein the preference is defined by the user.
16. The method of claim 1, implemented by a software program, wherein the preference is defined by a publisher of the software program.
17. The method of claim 1, wherein the preference is defined by a third party.

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18. The method of claim 1, wherein the preference associates the data pattern with address information for the computer network resource.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the customized viewpoint further includes information indicative of when the preference will expire.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein the preference has an originator, and the customized viewpoint includes information indicative of the originator.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the customized viewpoint further includes information corresponding to a status of the preference.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the status information is indicative of whether the preference is enabled.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein the customized viewpoint includes information representing a payment amount for use of the preference.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein the customized viewpoint includes a plurality of preferences, each providing an association between at least one data pattern and a computer network resource, and the viewpoint is defined by a preference database having a record for each of the preferences.

25. The method of claim 1, wherein generating the request is initiated by the user.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein generating the request occurs in response to the user activating a hyperlink embedded in an object presented to the user.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein generating the request occurs in response to the user entering address information for the content.

28. The method of claim 1, wherein generating the request occurs without being initiated by the user.

29. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic file comprises a markup language file.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein evaluating the electronic file includes comparing all of the user-viewable data portions of the markup language file with the data pattern of the preference.

31. The method of claim 1, wherein evaluating the electronic file includes examining the at least one portion of the electronic file and then comparing the at least one examined portion with the data pattern.

32. The method of claim 1, wherein evaluating the electronic file includes recognizing a match between the at least one portion of the electronic file and at least one variation of the data pattern.

33. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic file is presented without modification if the evaluating step did not recognize a match.

34. The method of claim 1, wherein modifying the electronic file upon a match includes inserting address information for the computer network resource associated with the matching data pattern into the electronic file.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the address information is inserted into the file based upon a location of the matching data pattern.

36. The method of claim 1, wherein modifying the electronic file upon a match includes inserting a hyperlink for the computer network resource associated with the matching data pattern into the electronic file.

37. The method of claim 1, wherein presenting the modified electronic file to the user includes presenting an indication of the link.

38. A method for operating a Web browser to provide a hyperlink in a markup language file being presented to a user, comprising:

defining a customized viewpoint for the user that includes at least one preference for the user, each of the at least one preference providing an association between at least one user-viewable data pattern and a Uniform Resource Locator ("URL") address for a computer network resource;

generating a request for content;

in response to the request, receiving a markup language file;

evaluating the markup language file to recognize a match between at least a portion of the markup language file and the at least one user-viewable data pattern of the at least one preference;

upon recognizing a match, modifying the markup language file to include a hyperlink to the URL address for the computer network resource associated with the matching user-viewable data pattern; and

presenting the modified markup language file to the user.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein presenting the modified markup language file to the user includes presenting an indication of the hyperlink.

40. A method for cross-referencing content of a first data structure to a computer network resource, comprising:

defining a customized viewpoint for a user that includes a preference for the user, the preference for the user providing an association between a data pattern and a computer network resource;

locating the data pattern in the first data structure; and

generating a second data structure including a link indicating the computer network resource associated with the located data pattern.

41. The method of claim 40, wherein the defining step includes selecting the customized viewpoint from among a plurality of viewpoints.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon data that identifies the user.

43. The method of claim 41, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon a characteristic of the user.

44. The method of claim 41, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon a selection made by the user.

45. The method of claim 41, wherein the selecting step includes selecting the customized viewpoint based upon data obtained from a cookie file stored on a computer that is being operated by the user.

46. The method of claim 40, wherein the user is a member of an organization, and the customized viewpoint is defined by the organization.

47. The method of claim 40, wherein the user is a member of a category of users, and the viewpoint is customized for the category of users.

48. The method of claim 40, wherein the viewpoint is defined to include a plurality of preferences, each providing an association between a data pattern and a computer network resource, and the locating step includes locating the data pattern of any of the preferences in the first data structure.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the generating step includes generating the second data structure to include a link indicating the computer network resource associated with each data pattern that is located.

50. The method of claim 40, wherein the preference associates a plurality of data patterns with the computer network resource, and the locating step includes locating any of the data patterns in the first data structure.

51. The method of claim 40, wherein the first data structure is in conformance with a hypertext markup standard.

52. The method of claim 40, wherein the first data structure is selected from a group consisting of a user-displayable text file and a database.

53. The method of claim 40, wherein the first data structure is selected from a group consisting of an applet and a script.

54. The method of claim 40, wherein the defining step includes defining a database including a plurality of preferences, each providing an association between at least one data pattern and a computer network resource.

55. The method of claim 40, wherein at least one of the defining, locating and generating steps is performed at a first computer, and at least one of the defining, locating and generating is performed at a second computer.

56. The method of claim 55, wherein the first and the second computers are in communication via a network.

57. The method of claim 56, wherein the first computer comprises a network server and the second computer comprises a client device.

58. The method of claim 40, wherein the locating step is performed at a first computer, and further comprising presenting the second data structure to the user at a second computer.

59. The method of claim 40, wherein the generating step is performed at a network server, and further comprising presenting the second data structure to the user at a computer system coupled to the network server.

60. The method of claim 40, further comprising receiving a request to retrieve the first data structure, and retrieving the first data structure from a first computer in response to the request.

61. The method of claim 40, wherein the defining step defines a database including a plurality of preferences, each preference associating a data pattern that may be located in the first data structure with a computer network resource identified by a Uniform Resource Locator ("URL").

62. The method of claim 61, wherein the URL identifies at least one object selected from a group consisting of a Web site, a Web page, an application, an applet and a script.

63. The method of claim 40, wherein the generating step includes inserting into the first data structure a hyperlink associated with a URL of the computer network resource associated with the located data pattern.

64. The method of claim 63, wherein the inserting step includes inserting the hyperlink at a location within the first data structure based on a location of the located data pattern to generate the second data structure.

65. The method of claim 63, wherein the inserting step includes inserting in accordance with a hypertext markup language at least one of text and a graphic associated with the hyperlink.

66. The method of claim 63, wherein the inserting step includes replacing the located data pattern in the first data structure with the hyperlink to generate the second data structure.



67. The method of claim 63, wherein the inserting step includes inserting modified text at a location in the first data structure, the modified text appearing different from text adjacent to the location in the first data structure.

68. The method of claim 67, wherein the modified text appears different from the text substantially adjacent to the location in the first data structure by being selected from a group consisting of underlined text, bold text, text of a different font, text of a different size and text of a different color.

69. The method of claim 63, wherein the inserting step further includes inserting an identification of originator into the hypertext link, the identification of originator identifying a party that generated the preference.

70. The method of claim 63, wherein the hyperlink is inserted such that the hyperlink appears to the user as an icon.

71. The method of claim 40, further comprising storing, with the association, an identification of a party that generated the association.

72. The method of claim 71, wherein the second data structure is in conformance with a hypertext markup language, the link is a hyperlink, and the identification is stored as a tag in the hyperlink.

73. The method of claim 40, further comprising storing an indication of a total number of times the preference has been accessed.

74. The method of claim 40, further comprising storing an indication of a number of times the preference has been accessed since the user last activated a link that was generated using that preference.

75. The method of claim 40, further comprising storing a status indicating whether the association provided by the preference is enabled.

76. The method of claim 75, further comprising altering the status when the association has been made a predetermined number of times.

77. The method of claim 75, further comprising altering the status when the link to the computer network resource has been activated to access the computer network resource a predetermined number of times.

78. The method of claim 75, further comprising receiving an authorization to adjust the status of the association, and altering the status based upon the authorization.

79. The method of claim 75, further comprising altering the status as a function of time.

80. The method of claim 40, further comprising, upon including the link in the second data structure, delivering an indication thereof to a party involved in providing the association.

81. The method of claim 80, further comprising causing an exchange of monetary value with the party involved in providing the association, upon delivery of the indication.

82. The method of claim 40, further comprising, upon activation of the link included in the second data structure, delivering an indication thereof to a party involved in providing the association.

83. The method of claim 82, further comprising causing an exchange of monetary value with the party involved in providing the association, upon delivery of the indication.

84. A system for providing a link in an electronic file being presented to a user, comprising:

means for defining a customized viewpoint for the user that includes a preference for the user, the preference for the user providing an association between a data pattern and a computer network resource;

means for generating a request for content;

means for receiving an electronic file in response to the request;

means for evaluating the electronic file to recognize a match between a portion of the electronic file and the data pattern of the preference;

means for modifying the electronic file, upon recognizing a match, to include a link to the computer network resource associated with the matching data pattern; and

means for presenting the modified electronic file to the user.

85. A system for cross-referencing content of a first data structure to a computer network resource, comprising:

means for defining a customized viewpoint for a user that includes a preference for the user, the preference for the user providing an association between a data pattern and a computer network resource;

means for locating the data pattern in the first data structure;

and

means for generating a second data structure including a link indicating the computer network resource associated with the located data pattern.

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